Amendments to the Claims

1   Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of handling time-sensitive messages, comprising steps of:

2   marking a message, by a creator thereof, as time-sensitive;

3   sending the marked message from a computing device of the creator to a computing

4   device of a recipient for whom the message was created, such that after the marked message is

5   received at the computing device of the recipient, it will <u>be processed by:</u>

6   <u>determining that the marked message is marked as being time-sensitive and that a</u>

7   <u>time period of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded;</u>

8   <u>determining whether a hierarchy of recipient notification techniques has been</u>

9   <u>defined for various intervals of the time-sensitivity, and if so, performing steps of:</u>

10   <u>determining an applicable one of the various intervals that corresponds to a</u>

11   <u>current time;</u>

12   <u>selecting one of the recipient notification techniques which corresponds to</u>

13   <u>the determined one of the various intervals; and</u>

14   <u>notifying the recipient of the marked message using the selected recipient</u>

15   <u>notification technique; and</u>

16   automatically ~~be rendered~~ <u>rendering the marked message</u> to the recipient using an

17   application adapted for processing the message <u>within a time period of the time-sensitivity;</u> [[,]]

18   and

19   <u>preventing</u> the recipient ~~will be prevented~~ from performing other actions with the

20   application until the recipient provides a response to the message~~, within a time period of the~~

21   ~~time-sensitivity~~; and

22   automatically receiving a reply from the recipient, sent from the computing device of the

23   recipient to the computing device of the creator following the recipient's response thereto.

1   Claim 2 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the marking step further

2   comprises indicating, by the creator, that snoozing is allowed by the recipient for this message,

3   such that the recipient will be allowed to temporarily delay the response to the rendered message

4   <u>for a time that remains</u> within the time period of the time-sensitivity.

1   Claim 3 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the marking step

2   further comprises indicating, by the creator, an ending time for the time period of the time-

3   sensitivity of the message.

1   Claim 4 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 3, wherein the marking step

2   further comprises indicating, by the creator, a starting time for the time period of the time-

3   sensitivity of the message.

1   Claim 5 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

2   receiving the marked message at the computing device of the recipient;

3   determining, at the computing device <u>of the recipient</u>, whether the time period of the time-

4   sensitivity of the received message has been reached; and

5   <u>if so,</u> automatically rendering the received message, at the computing device <u>of the</u>

6   <u>recipient</u>, to the recipient in the application <u>within the time period of the time-sensitivity</u>, and

7 preventing the recipient from performing other actions with the application, ~~within the time period~~

8 ~~of the time-sensitivity if so~~.

 Claim 6 (canceled)

1 Claim 7 (current amended): A method of improving electronic communications, comprising steps

2 of:

3 receiving a plurality of electronic messages at a computing device of a recipient to whom

4 the electronic messages are addressed; and

5 ~~evaluating, at the computing device, the received electronic messages for processing,~~

6 ~~further comprising steps of:~~

7 determining whether a selected one of the received electronic messages is marked as being

8 time-sensitive; and

9 if the determining step has a positive result and a time period of the time-sensitivity has

10 been reached but not exceeded, <u>processing the selected one, further comprising steps of:</u>

11 <u>determining whether a hierarchy of recipient notification techniques has been</u>

12 <u>defined for various intervals of the time-sensitivity, and if so, performing steps of:</u>

13 <u>determining an applicable one of the various intervals that corresponds to a</u>

14 <u>current time;</u>

15 <u>selecting one of the recipient notification techniques which corresponds to</u>

16 <u>the determined one of the various intervals; and</u>

17 <u>notifying the recipient of the selected one using the selected recipient</u>

18   notification technique;

19   automatically rendering the selected one to the recipient in an application adapted

20   for processing the selected one within the time period of the time-sensitivity[[,]]; and

21   preventing the recipient from performing other actions with the application until

22   the recipient provides a response to the selected one within the time period of the time-sensitivity.

Claim 8 (canceled)

1   Claim 9 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the processing step

2   further comprising comprises the steps of:

3   determining, when the selected one is marked as being time-sensitive and the time period

4   of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded, whether snoozing is allowed for the

5   selected one; and

6   if so, allowing the recipient to delay the response to the selected one until a later time,

7   wherein the later time remains within the time period of the time-sensitivity.

1   Claim 10 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the evaluating

2   processing step further comprises the [[step]] steps of:

3   determining, when the selected one is marked as being time-sensitive and the time period

4   of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded, whether snoozing is allowed for the

5   selected one; and

6   if so, allowing the recipient to suppress suppressing the preventing step only while (1) a

7   starting time of the time period has been reached [[but]] and (2) an ending time of the time period

8   has not been reached.

1   Claim 11 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 7, further comprising the step

2   of:

3   sending a notification of the response to a computing device of a creator of the rendered

4   selected one.

1   Claim 12 (original): The method according to Claim 7, further comprising the step of determining

2   whether processing of the rendered selected one is complete, and if not, remembering the

3   rendered selected one for subsequent evaluation at a later time, wherein the later time is within the

4   time period of the time-sensitivity.

Claim 13 (canceled)

1   Claim 14 (original): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the electronic messages are e-

2   mail messages.

1   Claim 15 (original): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the electronic messages are

2   electronic calendar events.

1   Claim 16 (original): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the electronic messages are to-do

2   items.

Claim 17 (canceled)

1   Claim 18 (currently amended): A system for handling time-sensitive messages, comprising:

2   means for marking a message, by a creator thereof, as time-sensitive;

3   means for sending the marked message from a computing device of the creator to a

4   computing device of a recipient for whom the message was created, such that after the marked

5   message is received at the computing device of the recipient, it will be processed by:

6   determining that the marked message is marked as being time-sensitive and that a

7   time period of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded;

8   determining whether a hierarchy of recipient notification techniques has been

9   defined for various intervals of the time-sensitivity, and if so, performing steps of:

10   determining an applicable one of the various intervals that corresponds to a

11   current time;

12   selecting one of the recipient notification techniques which corresponds to

13   the determined one of the various intervals; and

14   notifying the recipient of the marked message using the selected recipient

15   notification technique; and

16   automatically be rendered rendering the marked message to the recipient using an

17   application adapted for processing the message within a time period of the time-sensitivity; [[,]]

18   and

19   <u>preventing</u> the recipient ~~will be prevented~~ from performing other actions with the

20   application until the recipient provides a response to the message~~, within a time period of the~~

21   ~~time-sensitivity~~; and

22   means for automatically receiving a reply from the recipient, sent from the computing

23   device of the recipient to the computing device of the creator following the recipient's response.

1   Claim 19 (previously presented): The system according to Claim 18, wherein the marking means

2   further comprises means for indicating, by the creator, an ending time for the time period of the

3   time-sensitivity of the message.

1   Claim 20 (currently amended): A system for improving electronic communications, comprising:

2   means for receiving a plurality of electronic messages at a computing device of a recipient

3   to whom the electronic messages are addressed;

4   means for determining, at the computing device, whether a selected one of the received

5   electronic messages is marked as being time-sensitive[[,]]<u>; and</u>

6   <u>means for processing the selected one if the means for determining has a positive result</u>

7   and ~~if so, whether~~ a time period of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded[[;]]<u>,</u>

8   <u>further comprising:</u>

9   <u>means for determining whether a hierarchy of recipient notification techniques has</u>

10   <u>been defined for various intervals of the time-sensitivity, and if so, means for using the hierarchy</u>

11   <u>by:</u>

12   <u>determining an applicable one of the various intervals that corresponds to a</u>

13   <u>current time;</u>

14   <u>selecting one of the recipient notification techniques which corresponds to</u>

15   <u>the determined one of the various intervals; and</u>

16   <u>notifying the recipient of the selected one using the selected recipient</u>

17   <u>notification technique;</u> [[and]]

18   means for automatically rendering the selected one to the recipient in an

19   application adapted for processing the selected one within the time period of the time-

20   sensitivity[[,]]<u>;</u> and

21   <u>means for</u> preventing the recipient from performing other actions with the

22   application until the recipient provides a response to the selected one within the time period of the

23   time-sensitivity<s>, if so</s>.

Claim 21 (canceled)

1   Claim 22 (currently amended): A computer program product for handling time-sensitive

2   messages, the computer program product embodied on one or more computer-readable media and

3   comprising:

4   computer-readable program code for marking a message, by a creator thereof, as time-

5   sensitive;

6   computer-readable program code for sending the marked message from a computing

7   device of the creator to a computing device of a recipient for whom the message was created,

8   such that after the marked message is received at the computing device of the recipient, it will <u>be</u>

9   processed by:

10   determining that the marked message is marked as being time-sensitive and that a

11   time period of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded;

12   determining whether a hierarchy of recipient notification techniques has been

13   defined for various intervals of the time-sensitivity, and if so, performing steps of:

14   determining an applicable one of the various intervals that corresponds to a

15   current time;

16   selecting one of the recipient notification techniques which corresponds to

17   the determined one of the various intervals; and

18   notifying the recipient of the marked message using the selected recipient

19   notification technique; and

20   automatically ~~be rendered~~ rendering the marked message to the recipient using an

21   application adapted for processing the message within a time period of the time-sensitivity;[[,]]

22   and

23   preventing the recipient ~~will be prevented~~ from performing other actions with the

24   application until the recipient provides a response to the message~~, within a time period of the~~

25   ~~time-sensitivity~~; and

26   computer-readable program code for automatically receiving a reply from the recipient,

27   sent from the computing device of the recipient to the computing device of the creator following

28   the recipient's response thereto.

1   Claim 23 (previously presented): The computer program product according to Claim 22, wherein

2   the computer-readable program code for marking further comprises computer-readable program

3   code for indicating, by the creator, an ending time for the time period of the time-sensitivity of the

4   message.

1   Claim 24 (currently amended): A computer program product for improving electronic

2   communications, the computer program product embodied on one or more computer-readable

3   media and comprising:

4   computer-readable program code for receiving a plurality of electronic messages at a

5   computing device of a recipient to whom the electronic messages are addressed;

6   computer-readable program code for determining, at the computing device, whether a

7   selected one of the received electronic messages is marked as being time-sensitive, and if so,

8   whether a time period of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded; and

9   computer-readable program code for processing the selected one when the computer-

10   readable program code has a positive result, further comprising computer-readable program code

11   for:

12   determining whether a hierarchy of recipient notification techniques has been

13   defined for various intervals of the time-sensitivity, and if so, performing steps of:

14   determining an applicable one of the various intervals that corresponds to a

15   current time;

16   selecting one of the recipient notification techniques which corresponds to

17   the determined one of the various intervals; and

18   notifying the recipient of the selected one using the selected recipient

19   notification technique; [[and]]

20   computer-readable program code for automatically rendering the selected one to

21   the recipient in an application adapted for processing the selected one within the time period of

22   the time-sensitivity[[,]]; and

23   computer-readable program code for preventing the recipient from performing

24   other actions with the application until the recipient provides a response to the selected one within

25   the time period of the time-sensitivity, if so.

Claim 25 (canceled)

1   Claim 26 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the requiring

2   automatically rendering step further comprises the steps of:

3   automatically starting execution of an application for rendering the selected one, at the

4   computing device of the recipient, if the execution of the application is not currently started;

5   automatically bringing a window rendered by the application to a foreground of a display

6   of the computing device and making the window active;

7   automatically rendering the selected one in the active window; and

8   requiring the recipient to take action with the selected one before performing any other

9   tasks with the application.